

Nebeker: Band will hit the road for cross-country tour next month

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Family focused

These unexpected turns in Nebeker's life partly account for the five-year gap between albums. "And Then Like Lions" — which debuts Aug. 12 — is the indie folk band's third album, after 2008's "3 Rounds and a Sound" and 2011's "We Are The Tide."

Once they finished touring on the second album, Nebeker set off to write the third. But when his father's illness became known, "I decided to move closer to my parents' home in Gearhart and spend as much time with my dad as I could," he said.

"I was kind of spun out and didn't really know what to do," he said. "I definitely didn't know what to write about."

Bandmates Luke Ydstie and Kati Claborn, who live in Astoria, had a daughter, Hazel, around that time as well.

"They weren't ready to go into the studio then, either," Nebeker said. "We mostly just focused on family stuff that we were going through. And then, eventually, it made sense again to write the album."

He scrapped his old ideas and, fueled by his recent emotional journey, took his work in a new direction. "It was a very different album than I was expecting," he said.

'We kind of had an ongoing conversation about creative process, and we both just would get really excited about the ideas that would apply both to painting and songwriting.'

New musical terrain

Ryan Dobrowski, Blind Pilot's drummer who co-founded the band with Nebeker in the mid-2000s, said Nebeker always "digs pretty deep in his songwriting, but I feel like he was really ambitious with this one, tackling some subjects that people are generally afraid to talk about, or talk about in great depth at least."

Given the rather heavy content, the band "had to find the arrangements that were appropriate for that," he said. "There's that challenge of trying to find something that feels hopeful, but not just like, 'Everything's great and has always been great' — because things aren't always great."

As a band, they "try to find that balance between sadness and happiness," he said.

"Israel came with these songs pretty complete, and then to have them filled out and do them justice — it was a good challenge for all of us," he said.

Ydstie, who sings and plays bass, said with "And Then Like Lions" the band ventured beyond their comfort zone — past the spare acoustic sound that defined their first record and, to a lesser extent, their second — and into uncharted musical terrain.

"There are some things that will sound more familiar to people, and there are some things that are pretty different — tonal palettes and different approaches, I think, arrangement-wise and production-wise," he said.

Recorded in chunks over the course of a year, "And Then Like Lions" marks the band's first time recording with a well-known label, ATO Records.

On the road again

Once again, Blind Pilot is facing the tempest of the "album cycle": recording, rehearsing, promoting, touring and shooting music videos.

Come next month, the band embarks a cross-country tour, including two shows, on Aug. 19 and Aug. 20, at the Liberty Theater, where Nebeker is a board member.

"We're really happy to be doing these two shows at the Liberty — and incredibly flattered," said Dobrowski, who shares a house with Ydstie and Claborn. "I was pretty amazed at how fast that first one sold out. It's pretty cool to have that support after going dark for a little bit."

Touring is "what we love to do. We play music to play music," he said. "I think the band always gets much better when we've played consecutive shows."

"There's a really great thing that happens when you're performing night after night, and you really get into the craft of that," he said. "So I'm excited, not only just to get out on the road and see all the great places again, but to sort of tap into that thing that we can do when we start playing in front of an audience."

Nebeker and Dobrowski performed Blind Pilot as a duo until 2008, when Ydstie, Claborn, and Portland members Ian Krist and Dave Jorgensen joined.

'This is my thing'

Nebeker, who now lives south of Cannon Beach, said the music that most resonates with him finds "a universal core within a deeply personal sentiment," citing Bob Dylan, Joanna Newsom, Neutral Milk Hotel and Talking Heads as some of his main musical influences.

Asked whether their work seeds his own, Nebeker said, "It has to be that way, right? Just the nature of art, and the way that it moves through history — it doesn't come from nowhere."

His lyrics — charged with flares of intense feeling and snapshots of nonlinear storytelling — recall the work of Beat poets like Jack Kerouac, an author he read as a teenager. Kerouac's experimental 1960 novel, "Book of Dreams," had a profound impact on Nebeker's songwriting.

"That was it for me — that idea of capturing these strange sort of gestures of expression, but not totally on solid ground," he said. "The communication seems to happen on a more emotional level."

But Nebeker's greatest artistic influence remains his father. "We kind of had an ongoing conversation about creative process," he said, "and we both just would get really excited about the ideas that would apply both to painting and songwriting."

Neither father nor son would encroach too far onto the other's artistic territory, though.

"He played banjo, and I still draw for myself and do watercolor," he said. But, "for some reason, it just always felt like, 'No, that's your thing, and this is my thing.'"

"And Then Like Lions" is now available on preorder, which comes with the single "Umpqua Rushing." Tickets are still available for the band's Aug. 20 performance at the Liberty Theater.



Fort George Brewery Instagram

The Pokemon cartoon monster at Fort George Brewery.

Pokemon Go: 'People are realizing there's a whole world out there'

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"It's nice and safe," said Katrina Gasser, Kaden's mother, who was pointing her phone into the water as she attempted to catch a crab Pokemon. "I see it as a family activity."

The downside

Some players, however, have taken the cultural phenomenon to the extreme. Players nationally have been so distracted by the action on their phones that they have walked into traffic, crashed cars and fallen off bluffs. Others have trespassed on private property,

risking an armed confrontation.

Contestants hurriedly walking around downtown Astoria from marker to marker show that the North Coast is no exception to the craze inspired by Japanese fictional characters created in the mid-1990s.

"Well first of all, I'm up before 2 p.m. and I'm out walking so that's cool," said Holly Wolfgram.

Having been a fan of Pokemon for a while, Wolfgram, 20, sees the new app as a way to get out and connect with others. Poke Stops and the common goal to "catch them all" serve as conversation starters when players come across each

other with their phones out. "People in this town are pretty closed off and it's opened up a whole new world," she said.

Players can't yet send messages through the game, but the competitive aspect and physical closeness gets strangers talking to each other face-to-face.

"When I was a kid, I didn't play it," said Luke Wenker. The 29-year-old was out for a walk with his girlfriend and had loaded up on supplies as they walked to the Poke Stop at the pier. "It's silly, but I just wanted to see what it was all about," he said.

John Gentner, the owner of Metal Head, has watched the

phenomenon unfold from his shop downtown. "People are already glued to their phones, but this is a new intensity," he said. "One guy today came right in and was just worried about catching a Pokemon instead of acknowledging anyone."

Gentner describes himself as a low-fi person living in a hi-fi world but doesn't necessarily think Pokemania is a bad thing. "I see a lot of people hating on it. As much as I want to be a 'get off my lawn guy,' at the end of the day, people are getting outside. People are realizing there's a whole world out there."

Herzig: Councilor is not shy about his politics

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city and his fellow councilors to give greater weight to comments from individual residents on policy issues.

He helped convince the city in 2014 to support the Astoria Warming Center at the Astoria Senior Center while the building was under renovation. The warming center — an emer-

gency shelter for the homeless during the winter — moved to First United Methodist Church last winter.

Herzig has at times had prickly relationships with city staff and councilors. He was a critic of the team style of leadership under former Mayor Willis Van Dusen — claiming that the council was often in "lockstep" with the mayor — and described

himself after his first year at City Hall as the sole dissenting voice. Over the past few years, his verbal jousts with the more conservative Warr have been a feature at council meetings.

Diversity project

Active in the Democratic Party, and a regular presence on the Occupy Astoria Facebook page, Herzig is not shy

about his progressive politics.

Outside the City Council, Herzig is a leader in the Lower Columbia Diversity Project, a group that has promoted public discussion on race, sexuality and social justice issues.

Herzig's partner, Charles Schweigert, is an accomplished painter and sculptor. The couple has placed their South Slope home on the market.

CBH: Complaints circulated around North Coast for years

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Response to critical reviews

Complaints about Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare had circulated on the North Coast for years and, in many ways, were similar to the challenges in mental health care experienced across Oregon and the nation. But after a woman with a history of mental illness jumped off the Astoria Bridge in April 2015 — and it was discovered that she had multiple interactions with police and the agency in the months before her death — the agency came under greater scrutiny.

The agency is on track to respond to a critical Oregon Health Authority review in June that validated many of the public and internal concerns about management and quality of care.

The state review found that the agency will need regulatory oversight "until stability in the community mental health system is reached."

"I think the things that they identified in that audit are all fixable," Baker said. "And the challenges with CBH aren't anything that people don't already know and have heard about."

The Oregon Health Authority review was provided to The Daily Astorian by an anonymous source in June. The state formally released the report to the newspaper on Friday in response to a public records request.

A separate internal investigation into Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare's management was also conducted after the labor union that represents workers at the agency took a "no confidence" vote in the former clinical director.

The findings of the investigation have not been released publicly, and the agency has declined a request by The Daily Astorian to disclose the conclu-

sions. Three top administrators left the agency after the investigation, and two federal lawsuits have been filed over management issues.

Baker said in an email Saturday that the agency is unable to release the internal report "because it contains personal and personnel information subject to attorney-client privilege."

"However, the CBH board took the findings seriously. Existing and newly installed CBH management are in the process of addressing the findings of the report. We have every confidence that the organization will be much stronger moving forward and more effective in partnering with other stakeholders and in serving the behavioral health needs in Clatsop County."

Clear expectations

County Manager Cameron Moore believes it is important for the county to make clear what the expectations are for Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare going forward.

The county Board of Commissioners could hold a work session in August with Baker, the agency's board, Greater Oregon Behavioral Health and the Oregon Health Authority to outline responsibilities.

"I think we're all happy that we're finally seeing things at CBH move in a positive direction," Moore told county commissioners Wednesday night. "But I also think it's very important now that the commission, the CBH board and state agencies make sure that we're all on the same page

going forward."

Baker has been meeting with civic and law enforcement leaders throughout the county to help restore the agency's reputation.

"It's really been to reach out and thank them for their patience, assure them that we're committed to being a strong, vibrant organization. That we're open to problems, challenges, criticism," she said. "We want to address that. We want to be an organization that this community is proud of."

But she also knows she will be judged by whether the agency improves.

"I don't expect people to just believe everything that I'm going to say," Baker said. "They need to see action. So that's what I'm going to do."

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